

**AFFIDAVIT AND STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

I, United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General (USPS-OIG), Special Agent (SA) Rene Martinez, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

1. I am a SA with the USPS-OIG and have been since March 2021. The USPS-OIG helps maintain the confidence and integrity of the U.S. Postal system and improve the bottom line of the United States Postal Service (USPS) through independent audits and investigations. SAs conduct criminal and administrative investigations on internal and external subjects to help prevent and detect fraud, waste, and misconduct, as well as to deter crimes against the U.S. Postal system.

2. I am assigned as a USPS-OIG Narcotics Agent at the Tucson Associate Office, which is responsible for the state of Arizona. I also hold a secondary role as a USPS-OIG Mail Theft Agent. As a USPS-OIG Narcotics Agent, I conduct criminal investigations concerning USPS employees' illicit drug activity at postal facilities or while on-duty, in addition to external subjects who abuse the U.S. Postal system. Part of my training as an USPS-OIG Narcotics Agent included narcotic investigative techniques and the training in the identification and detection of illicit drugs being transported via the U.S. mail.

3. I was previously employed as an SA with the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) for approximately 14 years. OSI is the Department of the Air Force's major investigative service whose primary responsibilities include conducting criminal investigations and providing counterintelligence services. In my last assignment with OSI, I served as a full-time Task Force Officer with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Force in Albuquerque, NM, conducting national security investigations related to international and domestic terrorism. During my 15-year career as a federal law enforcement officer, I have conducted a variety of investigations and written and executed search warrants resulting in the recovery of evidence and

seizure of property.

4. I have assisted USPS-OIG Narcotics Agents and United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Postal Inspectors on narcotics investigations involving individuals violating Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) (Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance), 843(b) (Use of a Communication Facility to Facilitate the Distribution of a Controlled Substance), and 846 (Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance). The facts and information contained in this affidavit are based on my personal knowledge, as well as that of Postal Inspectors and/or other law enforcement officers involved in this investigation as described below.

5. This Affidavit is made in support of an application for a search warrant for one USPS Priority Mail Parcel, hereafter, referred to as **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786**. Based on a positive narcotics-detecting canine alert, and my training and experience, I believe **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** contains controlled substance(s) or proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs.

6. **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** is further described as follows:

One USPS Priority Mail parcel bearing USPS tracking number 9405 5368 9523 2445 8527 86, addressed to “Sage Peabody, 6066 E Calle Silvosa, Tucson, AZ 85711,” with a return address of “Alex Mistretta, 326 Foxwood Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409.” It is a small, flat-rate Priority Mail cardboard box, white in color, measuring approximately 7.2” X 8.8” X 1.2”; weighing approximately 2.9 ounces; postmarked October 8, 2021; and bearing \$7.31 in postage purchased with cryptocurrency.

### **BACKGROUND**

7. From my training and experience, as well as the training and experience of other USPS-OIG Narcotics Agents and Postal Inspectors, I am aware that the U.S. mail system is

frequently used to transport illicit drugs and/or proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs to areas throughout the U.S. I also know that drug traffickers prefer mail/delivery services such as Express Mail and Priority Mail because of their reliability and the ability to track the article's progress to the intended delivery point. When a drug trafficker learns that a mailed article has not arrived as scheduled, he/she becomes suspicious of any delayed attempt to deliver the item.

8. Based on my training and experience, and consulting with law enforcement partners familiar with dark web and cryptocurrency investigations, when buying and selling illicit substances through the internet, narcotics traffickers commonly use cryptocurrency due to the anonymity it affords. Narcotics traffickers using cryptocurrency commonly use dark web vendors and third-party shipping companies to facilitate this process.

9. Subjects using cryptocurrency and third-party vendor shipping for anonymity will often use an existing, deliverable return address; however, the name listed will not be associated to that address. In addition, the subject themselves will have no association to that address. The subject will use the chosen return address for several months and later use a different return address to avoid law enforcement investigative techniques. This process will occur multiple times during the course of the criminal activity, but the unique characteristics of the parcels being shipped will often remain the same.

10. From my training, personal experience, and the collective experiences related to me by other USPS-OIG Narcotics Agents and Postal Inspectors who specialize in investigations relating to the mailing of illicit drugs and proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs, I am aware that the State of Arizona is a source location for illicit drugs based on its proximity to the border between the U.S. and Mexico. As such, illicit drugs are frequently transported from Arizona via USPS, and proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs are frequently returned to Arizona via USPS.

11. Based on my training and experience regarding the use of Express Mail and Priority Mail to transport illicit drugs and/or the proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs, I am aware that these parcels usually contain some or all the following characteristics:

- a. The parcel's postage is pre-purchased with cryptocurrency or paid with cash to conceal the narcotics trafficker's identity.
- b. The parcel has a tracking number to provide the narcotics trafficker the ability to track the parcel's progress to the point of delivery.
- c. The parcel is destined for an area known to be a frequent destination point for illicit drugs, having been mailed from an area known to be a source area for illicit drugs.
- d. The parcel originated from an area known to be a frequent origination point for proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs, having been mailed to an area known to be a destination area for proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs.

12. Express Mail and Priority Mail parcels found to meet any or all the characteristics described above are often further scrutinized by USPS-OIG Narcotics Agents and Postal Inspectors through address verifications and an examination by a trained narcotics-detecting canine.

#### **RELEVANT FACTS PERTAINING TO THE SUBJECT PARCEL**

13. On or about October 11, 2021, while reviewing USPS databases, I discovered a suspicious parcel (**SUBJECT PARCEL #2786**), being mailed from Wilmington, NC to an address in Tucson, AZ.

14. From the information in USPS databases, I found **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** to be suspicious for the following reasons:

- a. First, **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** bore postage pre-paid with cryptocurrency, which is commonly used by narcotics traffickers due to the anonymity it affords.
- b. Second, a Lexis-Nexis Accurint query disclosed the sender's name, "Alex Mistretta", listed on **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** has never been associated to the return address, "326 Foxwood Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409," which is a property currently up for sale. Fictitious names and addresses are commonly used by narcotics traffickers to evade law enforcement.
- c. Third, **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** had a tracking number. Nearly all illicit drugs and their proceeds parcels bear tracking numbers allowing the sender and receiver to track the progress of the shipment from origination to destination.

15. Because of the suspicious nature of **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786**, I contacted the Coronado Post Office in Tucson, AZ, and requested **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** be held for me for further inspection. On October 13, 2021, I retrieved **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** from the Coronado Post Office and conducted a physical examination of and determined it met some of the characteristics listed above. I confirmed **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** bore a postage label pre-purchased using cryptocurrency and a tracking number. I also confirmed the sender's name on **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** was fictitious and no one with that name was ever associated to the return address. Based on my training, experience, and the collective experiences related to me by other USPS-OIG Narcotics Agents and Postal Inspectors who specialize in investigations relating to the mailing of illicit drugs, it is common for drug traffickers to use names not associated with an address or fictitious names and addresses to evade detection by law enforcement.

**CANINE EXAMINATION OF THE SUBJECT PARCEL**

16. On October 14, 2021, at approximately 11:10 am, I met with United States Border Patrol (USBP) Supervisory Agent/Canine Handler Paul Du Bois and his drug detecting canine, Dell, at the Tucson Main Post Office, 1501 S. Cherrybell Stravenue, Tucson, AZ. Dell is certified to detect the odors of marijuana, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and their derivatives. I placed **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** in a cleared and controlled area for examination by Agent Du Bois and Dell. Agent Du Bois informed SA Martinez at approximately 11:20 a.m. that Dell alerted to **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786**, indicating the presence of narcotics or a controlled substance, or other evidence with an odor of narcotics or a controlled substance within the parcel.

**CONCLUSION**

17. Based on these facts, your affiant asserts that there is probable cause to believe that **SUBJECT PARCEL #2786** described above, contains illicit drugs and/or proceeds from the sale of illicit drugs, constituting evidence of violations of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) (Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance), 843(b) (Use of a Communication Facility to Facilitate the Distribution of a Controlled Substance), and 846 (Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance).

*Rene Martinez*

SPECIAL AGENT RENE MARTINEZ  
USPS Office of Inspector General

Subscribed and sworn to before me on this 15<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2021.

*Bruce G. Macdonald*

Bruce G. Macdonald  
United States Magistrate Judge